

SNAC youth leader meetings go virtual, create opportunities to engage families

Completed 

Reporting Periods	SNAP-Ed 2020 (October 1, 2019 - September 30, 2020)
Site	Adam (William Laird) Elementary
Unit	Santa Barbara (County)
COVID-19 Impact	New due to COVID-19
Program Activity	4-H SNAC - Adam
Keywords	Cooking Food Resource Management Healthy Eating Nutrition 4-H #COVID
Comments	Photo descriptions: Virtual SNAC - SNAC youth leader picking up materials to participate in online SNAC meetings and cooking Adam - SNAC showing off their strawberry salad recipe creations
Uploads	Virtual SNAC_Success Story.jpg Adam virtual SNAC.png
Has Photo Releases	Yes
Created By	 Shannon Klisch
Last Modified By	 Shannon Klisch

Created	08/19/2020 8:37 a.m.
Modified	10/02/2020 4:50 p.m.
<u>PEARS Success Story ID ()</u>	17141

Collaborators

User	Contributor	View Only	View & Edit	Contribution
Shannon Klisch	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Story

Background

CalFresh Healthy Living, UCCE in San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties (UC) works with clients in low-income settings to teach nutrition and physical activity education and support environmental changes to increase the likelihood that community members will have access to healthy eating and active living opportunities. A major community engagement effort of UC is the 4-H Student Nutrition Advisory Council (SNAC) youth leadership clubs. SNAC clubs are youth-led and meet weekly after school to identify opportunities for training, leadership and advocacy related to healthy eating and active living.

Story Narrative

THE NEED

In March 2020, as schools closed and shelter at home was ordered throughout California due to COVID-19, providing supports to families and youth with low-incomes became increasingly challenging. Where we had once engaged participants in hands-on food demonstrations to build cooking skills and nutrition knowledge primarily in school settings, now we were tasked with continuing to reach some of our most vulnerable community members without face to face contact.

At the same time, conversations with key stakeholders and family members indicated a need for youth to continue to connect with their peers and adult mentors. Stakeholders discussed how sheltering at home brought a new sense of fear and isolation for some, for others issues of food insecurity increased as youth lost access to meals at school temporarily, family members lost hours at work and grocery shopping became increasingly difficult or hazardous. In order to collect feedback from SNAC youth on how to continue club meetings from home, UC educators distributed an anonymous survey regarding their interest in continuing SNAC activities and cooking tools available at home.

THE WORK

To continue to support SNAC youth leaders, UC educators worked in collaboration with school partners at two school sites to problem-solve and work through technical and safety issues. At one school site, the principal hosted the online meeting and invited students and UC staff to join. At another school site, UC staff engaged with 4-H enrolled youth and families through online UC platforms and chat tools. In both cases, youth utilized available home technology resources and staff worked with families to problem-solve connectivity issues when they occurred. Since several youth needed to use their parent's phone to connect, SNAC meetings were held later in the day to accommodate parents returning home from work. Other youth were able to use the computers and hotspots issued by their school to participate and lead the SNAC meetings.

The youth-led SNAC meetings started with the 4-H pledge and included physical activity, cooking and time to plan the following week's activities together, which included options such as gardening. The recipes were limited to five ingredients or less, with a focus on in-season produce, and standard cooking equipment available in their homes. To ensure youth had the ingredients and/or materials needed for the recipe or garden nutrition education activity, UC educators coordinated materials distribution with school staff. These distributions followed COVID-19 safety protocols and often occurred at the same time as school meal pick-ups.

Youth shared the recipe and information about food safety, food budgeting, and the nutritional value of featured ingredients using materials from Oregon State University's Food Hero Monthly handouts with their families. After each session, the youth reported their feedback and the impact the recipe had on them and their family members by completing an anonymous survey.

THE IMPACT

Starting in April 2020, 18 youth continued their club meetings online for nine consecutive weeks through the end of the school year. SNAC youth leaders engaged, on average, three additional family members in a weekly cooking, nutrition or garden activity with some youth engaging one additional family member and others engaging up to five for a total of 117 lessons taught to family members (duplicate counts). Lesson topics reported by youth leaders include recipe demonstration and tastings, the benefits of eating from one or more of the MyPlate food groups, how to make healthy meals on a budget, and using seasonal produce.

Students commented on several recipe changes or modifications including omitting onions, adding avocado, tomatoes or cucumber. Several students commented on how they involved their families in prepping the recipe. Overall, of the six recipes tasted, 92% of youth responses (n=38) indicate that they would make the recipe again.

These efforts generate improved food security for low-income community members and are examples of UC ANR's Public Value: Safeguarding abundant and healthy food for all Californian's as we face uncertainty and a global pandemic.

SUSTAINING SUCCESS

An unexpected impact of the shift to virtual SNAC observed by the adult facilitators was that youth who were more hesitant to speak up during in-person club meetings shared more frequently in the virtual setting. Additionally, the shift from cooking in a classroom to cooking in their homes in a virtual format helped to foster more real-world application and skill transferal. All the recipes used only cooking equipment that all students indicated that they had at home. Adult facilitators observed an increase in their creativity and ability to modify the recipes to include ingredients they preferred, such as adding avocado on top of a veggie frittata, and use the utensils and equipment around them, such as using a fork instead of a whisk. Also, cooking at home gave families the opportunity to get involved. One club member's mother assisted with cooking, and a few other member's siblings joined the meetings.

CalFresh Healthy Living, UC will continue to problem-solve, innovate, and adapt as we face uncertainty and new realities that will impact the way we provide nutrition and physical activity supports in the future. Long-term impacts of shelter-at-home including loss of income, social isolation, and inequitable access to technology and internet, will continue to be factors affecting how we deliver education and support in our communities. While nutrition education does not rise to the level of an essential service, if left unaddressed as people work to meet their most basic needs, it could have potential impacts on chronic disease and susceptibility to severe illness with COVID-19. Because of these issues, the imperative to be flexible and innovative and to stay close to the needs of the communities we serve is now more important than ever. We will sustain this work through thoughtful planning, innovative relationship building, and continually reminding our community partners and clients that we are here to support and fortify community resilience.

Favorite Quote

"Rosa is doing a wonderful job with SNAC students. I'm so proud of you all [SNAC youth]." – School Principal

One club member's parent shared that she would like to support her child in continuing the SNAC club at their middle school next year. She shared that the club was a safe place for youth to grow and get to know themselves.

Youth quotes:

"I made a different [recipe] and added more Chile and it was supper hot so I added more strawberries and lemon juice which made it sweeter."

"My family really liked it [baby tomato bites recipe] and said that I should make it again."

"My mom said she would add more mangoes and more ice."

SNAP-Ed Custom Data

Related Framework Indicators

Food Resource Management (ST2)
Healthy Eating Behaviors (MT1)
Physical Activity & Reduced Sedentary Behavior (MT3)
Organizational Partnerships (ST7)
Nutrition Supports (MT5)

Socio-Ecological Framework

Individual/Family

Approaches

Individual or group-based nutrition educators (e.g. direct education)